**Subject-Verb Agreement**

This handout gives several guidelines to help your subjects and verbs agree.

1. When the subject of a sentence is composed of two or more nouns or pronouns connected by “and,” use a plural verb.

**She and her friends** *are* at the fair.

1. When two or more singular nouns or pronouns are connected by “or” or “nor”, use a singular verb.

The **book or the pen** *is* in the drawer.

1. When a compound subject contains both a singular and a plural noun or pronoun joined by “or” or “nor,” the verb should agree with the part of the subject that is nearer the verb.

The **boy or his friends** *run* every day.

His friends or the **boy** *runs* every day.

1. “Doesn't” is a contraction of “does not” and should be used only with a singular subject. “Don't” is a contraction of “do not” and should be used only with a plural subject. The exception to this rule appears in the case of the first person and second person pronouns “I” and “you.” With these pronouns, the contraction “don't” should be used.

**He** *doesn't* like it.

**They** *don't* like it.

1. Do not be misled by a phrase that comes between the subject and the verb. The verb agrees with the subject, not with a noun or pronoun in the phrase.

**One** of the boxes *is* open

The **people** who listen to that music *are* few.

The **team** captain, as well as his players, *is* anxious.

The **book**, including all the chapters in the first section, *is* boring.

The **woman** with all the dogs *walks* down my street.

1. The words “each,” “each one,” “either,” “neither,” “everyone,” “everybody,” “anybody,” “anyone,” “nobody,” “somebody,” “someone,” and “no one” are singular and require a singular verb.

**Each** of these hot dogs *is* juicy.

**Everybody** *knows* Mr. Jones.

**Either** *is* correct.

1. Nouns such as “civics,” “mathematics,” “dollars,” “measles,” and “news” require singular verbs.

The **news** *is* on at six.

Note: the word dollars is a special case. When talking about an amount of money, it requires a singular verb, but when referring to the dollars themselves, a plural verb is required.

**Five dollars** *is* a lot of money.

**Dollars***are* often used instead of rubles in Russia.

1. Nouns such as “scissors,” “tweezers,” “trousers,” and “shears” require plural verbs. (There are two parts to these things.)

These **scissors** *are* dull.

Those **trousers** *are* made of wool.

1. In sentences beginning with "there is" or "there are," the subject follows the verb. Since "there" is not the subject, the verb agrees with what follows.

There *are* many **questions**.

There *is* a **question**.

1. Collective nouns are words that imply more than one person but that are considered singular and take a singular verb, such as: group, team, committee, class, and family.

The **team** *runs* during practice.

The **committee** *decides* how to proceed.

The **family** *has* a long history.

My **family** *has* never been able to agree.

The **crew** *is* preparing to dock the ship.

1. Expressions such as “with,” “together with,” “including,” “accompanied by,” “in addition to,” or “as well” do not change the number of the subject. If the subject is singular, the verb is too.

The **President**, accompanied by his wife, *is* traveling to India.

All of the **books,** including yours, *are* in that box.